

WHAT CLOTHING MEANS TO A CHILD

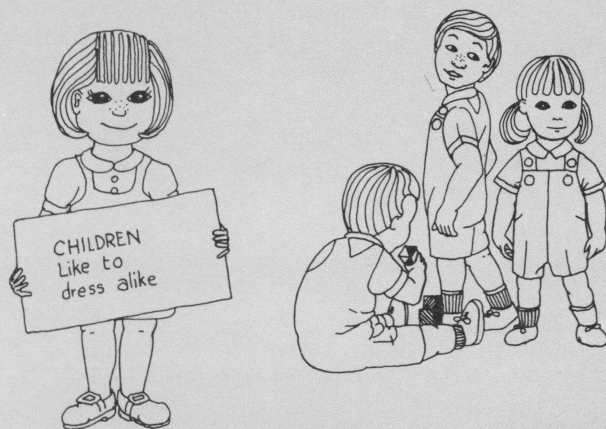
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A well-dressed 6 to 12-year-old child is better mannered, more self-confident and less rowdy than a poorly dressed one. As children approach school age and enter a world of playmates and classrooms, their dress should suit the role they will be expected to perform. The clothes they wear play a part in their adjustment in social growth and influence their mental health.

Children want certain things in their clothes which help them in this social development.

DESIRE TO CONFORM

The child wants his clothes to conform to the style worn by his playmates. The school-age child is intensely motivated to gain acceptance from his peer group. If a child is dressed very differently from his associates he becomes self conscious and has a feeling of anxiety and inferiority. These characteristics often carry over into adulthood. Children need to develop socially. Clothing can help the child in his social development with children his own age, school teachers and others. Children at this age, especially girls, become independent and opinionated concerning what they will or will not wear. Conforming to the group is still important, but there also is evidence of a desire to be different which makes for unpredictable behavior.



EASY TO MANIPULATE

A child wants his clothes to be easy to manipulate. Children may become impatient if dressing takes too long or if they have to obtain help in dressing. Some girls dislike school dresses with buttons or sashes in the back as they dislike being dependent on someone to assist them in dressing. They join groups to demonstrate their independence and their ability to do things on their own. "Self-help features" and "like friends" seem more important for the daughters than the mothers. Their clothes should encourage independence in dressing and give them confidence in doing for themselves.



COMFORT IMPORTANT

A child wants his clothes to be comfortable. Studies have indicated that comfort is important to the school-age child and that the most disliked clothes are those which hinder muscular skills. Loosely fitting garments bought for a child to grow into are just as disturbing as those which are too tight. Clothing purchased too large also may become faded or worn looking by the time the child grows into them. Poor fit is the reason most frequently given by young children for not wearing their clothes. Many mothers place more emphasis in children's clothing on appearance than comfort. Light-weight clothes are desirable. Heavy, bulky clothes are awkward to handle and excess weight tires a child at play.

DURABILITY

Clothes for children should be durable and capable of standing hard wear. A child is not interested in a dainty, fragile garment if it means that he must sacrifice fun to wear it. Today, fashion in commercial clothing, especially for girls, seems to take precedence over durability, comfort and suitability of design for the age of the child.



ATTRACTIVE FEATURES

A child desires clothes that are attractive. The school-age child wants attention if it is favorable. The fear of being laughed at is one of his greatest fears. Social approval is most important to the school-age child. Attractive clothes affect the child's own behavior as well as the behavior of the group toward the child. The basis for fashion is determined largely by what members of his group are wearing. The older elementary school child still wants comfort in clothes; however, he begins to show an interest in style. The younger child prefers bright colors and decorative effects, while the older child tends to select pale colors and more simple designs.

"To look fit is to feel fit." This is the first step toward any accomplishment whether at school or at play. Suitable clothes can make childhood a delightful period. They may contribute to developing the character and self-confidence of the child. Clothes may influence his mental health by encouraging him to accept responsibility, to cooperate and to contribute.



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